

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A low depth bottle crate having a peripheral wall of uniform height, said peripheral wall including a pair of side walls and a pair of end walls; a crate bottom connected to said peripheral wall, an upper surface of said crate bottom formed to include a bottle supporting platform for each bottle to be received in the crate; a plurality²⁶ of substantially U-shaped cut-outs in upper portions³⁸ of said side and end walls defining columns⁴² between said cut-outs, lower portions of said peripheral wall and said columns being of single wall construction except for hollow caps⁴⁸ at upper ends of said columns that are of double wall construction; each of said columns, except for four corner columns, having a support buttress³² extending downwardly and inwardly from a lower edge of a respective one of said hollow caps to said crate bottom, and wherein said cut-outs terminate at a ledge^{64,66,68} that separates said upper portions of said side and end walls from said lower portions of said side and end walls, and further wherein said lower portions of said side and end walls are connected to said crate bottom by a plurality of inwardly directed ribs arranged in groups, directly below each cut-out.

2. The crate of claim 1 wherein each group comprises three substantially L-shaped ribs.

3. The crate of claim 1 wherein said buttresses engage said crate bottom inwardly of said groups of inwardly directed ribs.

4. The crate of claim 1 including at least one nesting ¹⁴⁵rib between each of said buttresses and an interior surface of each of said columns.

5. The crate of claim 4 including a nesting rib on an interior surface of each said corner column.

6. The crate of claim 1 wherein said bottle supporting platforms are flush with said crate bottom.

7. The crate of claim 1 wherein handle cut-outs are provided in lower portions of said end walls, and handle bars extend between adjacent columns in said end walls directly above said handle cut-outs.

8. The crate of claim 7 wherein said handle bars are of double wall thickness.

9. The crate of claim 8 wherein each handle bar is connected directly to said crate bottom.

10. The crate of claim 1 wherein each of said hollow caps is formed with a pair of bottle supporting ribs facing respective adjacent bottle receiving platforms.

11. The crate of claim 1 wherein said crate bottom has a lower surface formed with an array of recesses adapted to engage bottle caps of bottles carried in an underlying similar crate.

Sub^a 27 12. A low depth bottle crate having a peripheral wall of uniform height, said peripheral wall including a

pair of side walls and a pair of end walls; a crate bottom connected to said peripheral wall, an upper surface of said crate bottom formed to include a bottle supporting platform for each bottle to be received in the crate; a plurality of substantially U-shaped ²⁶ cut-outs in upper portions of said side and end walls defining ³⁸ columns between said cut-outs, said cut-outs terminating at a ³² ledge that separates said upper portions of said side and end walls from lower portions of said side and end walls, and wherein ³⁴ handle cut-outs are provided in lower portions of said end walls, defining ³⁶ handle bars that extend between adjacent columns in said end walls directly above said handle cut-outs, each handle bar connected directly to the crate bottom at a mid-point of said handle bar.

13. The crate of claim 12 wherein said handle bar is connected to said ~~crate bottom~~ by a strut extending from said handle bar to a ~~raised pedestal~~ on said crate bottom.

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14. The crate of claim 12 wherein said upper surface of said crate bottom is flat, with no defined bottle receiving pockets.

15. The crate of claim 12 wherein said handle bars are of double wall thickness.

16. The crate of claim 14 wherein said crate bottom has a lower surface formed with an array of recesses adapted to engage bottle caps of bottles carried in an underlying similar crate.

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17. A low depth bottle crate having a peripheral wall of uniform height, said peripheral wall including a pair of side walls and a pair of end walls; a crate bottom connected to said peripheral wall, an upper surface of said crate bottom formed to include a bottle supporting platform for each bottle to be received in the crate; a plurality of substantially U-shaped cut-outs²⁶ in upper portions of said side and end walls defining columns³⁶ between said cut-outs, lower portions of said peripheral wall and said columns being of single wall construction except for hollow caps⁴² at upper ends of said columns that are of double wall construction; and wherein handle cut-outs³⁴ are provided in lower portions of said end walls, and handle bars³⁶ extend between adjacent columns in said end walls directly above said handle cut-outs, each handle bar connected directly to the crate bottom; said crate bottom having a lower surface formed with an array of recesses adapted to engage bottle caps of bottles carried in an underlying similar crate, said recesses in each of four quadrants being individually different but substantial mirror images of recesses in adjacent quadrants in respective longitudinal and transverse directions.

18. The low depth crate of claim 17 wherein said lower portions of said peripheral wall are connected to said crate bottom by a plurality of groups of substantially C-shaped ribs.

19. The low depth crate of claim 18 wherein said recesses have peripheries defined by vertically oriented ribs, and wherein said substantially L-shaped ribs have

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horizontal components with heights less than corresponding heights of said vertically oriented ribs.

20. The crate of claim 17 wherein said handle bars are of double wall thickness.

~~21. The crate of claim 20 wherein each handle bar is connected directly to said crate bottom.~~

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22. The crate of claim 17 wherein each of said hollow caps is formed with a pair of bottle supporting ribs facing respective adjacent bottle receiving platforms.

23. The crate of claim 12 wherein said side walls are formed with a plurality of laterally spaced wedge slides that provide a smooth transitions from said upper portions to said lower portion of said side walls.

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